

Listen to young people on dealing with climate change

The Toronto Star

December 2, 2019 Monday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. A12

Length: 459 words

Byline: Andria Teather Contributor

Body

Recently, 11,000 scientists from 153 countries came together to sign a global climate emergency declaration.

It was yet another example of why climate change should be on everyone's minds - and, indeed, seems to be. It even played a central role in the fall federal election.

Not that the election of the Liberal party, which supports action on climate change, has settled things.

In Canada, there are provinces that are vehemently opposed to the carbon tax as well as provinces opposed to the construction of more pipelines. With a minority government, the governing party will now need the support of many others to effect change.

For that, they can turn to youth. Fuelled by the frustration of not having the ability to participate in the electoral process, youth in Canada are searching for a chance to be heard. Youth activism could be that lifeline for this new government - or conversely spell its demise.

And if the momentum youth are creating is supported sufficiently across the country in a manner that will no longer tolerate complacency they could make a real difference.

Once communities across the country realize that climate change action demanded by these youth is positive, both from an environmental and economic perspective, new programs will begin to create effective results.

The challenge we face is to keep these youth, who support Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, focused and listen to the them and their families.

Indeed, to keep this youth-driven momentum moving we must encourage people to look for opportunities to help the environment in their own communities.

For young people, opportunities and support are available through environmental programs like Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots.

This program began in 1991 when Goodall met with 12 Tanzanian high school students who wanted to tackle urgent problems in their community. That first Roots & Shoots group has multiplied many times, with youth in that organization now taking action in 50 countries around the world.

Sceptics will proclaim that one person or one group can't make any tangible difference.

The evidence however suggests the exact opposite. This is especially true when one person has the courage to speak up, shed light on an important issue and inspire and motivate others to take action as Goodall and, now, Thunberg, have.

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We live in an age of social media. With powerful tools that give instant access to global audiences in the hands of our youth they will not be satisfied with inactivity on the part of our political leaders.

If results aren't forthcoming quickly we should follow their example, join in and add to the magnitude of their youth quake.

The earth's survival, after all, is at stake.

Andria Teather is CEO of the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: COLUMN

Publication-Type: NEWSPAPER

Subject: CLIMATE ACTION (90%); CLIMATE CHANGE (90%); CLIMATOLOGY (90%); ELECTIONS (90%); ELECTIONS & POLITICS (90%); GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (90%); ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES (78%); NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS (78%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (77%); TYPES OF GOVERNMENT (77%); REPORTS, REVIEWS & SECTIONS (74%); STUDENT ACTIVISM (73%); POLITICAL PARTIES (72%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (71%); STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (69%); EXECUTIVES (60%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (59%); CARBON TAX (56%); HIGH SCHOOLS (50%)

Industry: CARBON TAX (56%); HIGH SCHOOLS (50%)

Person: GRETA THUNBERG (79%)

Geographic: CANADA (93%)

Load-Date: December 2, 2019

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